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ABSTRACT

This study considers use of the "educational park" and "middle school" concepts in Fresno, California. It is part of Phase II of PROJECT DESIGN, an ESEA Title III project administered by the Fresno City Unified School District. The educational park remains largely theoretical; few have moved to physical planning and construction stages. The report notes that the possible benefits of facilitating racial integration, improved efficiency and productivity, increased facility utilization, wider range of various special facilities, and increased support and specialist staff services seem more than outweighed by massive construction and transportation funding. It is suggested that the district continue to monitor this concept. However, it is recommended that the Fresno schools seriously consider adopting an organizational pattern containing middle schools. Not only do the values of middle schools make this approach desirable for Fresno, but also many of the recent innovative trends in Fresno would be further facilitated if the district would adopt the middle school concept. Existing school facilities and recently initiated building would both be utilized with minor modification. (Author/DE)

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PROJECT Design

INTERAGENCY PLANNING FOR URBAN EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

33. SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PATTERNS

THE EDUCATIONAL PARK

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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EA 002 850

JUNE, 1969

A TITLE III ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATIONAL ACT EXEMPLARY PROJECT

ADMINISTERED BY THE FRESNO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

FRESNO CITY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Board of Education

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SCHOOL ORGANIZATION PATTERNS:

THE EDUCATIONAL PARK

THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

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Foreword

PROJECT DESIGN (Interagency Planning for Urban Educational Needs) was organized as a two year project to develop a comprehensive long-range Master Plan of Education for the Fresno City Unified School District in California. Funded by the United States Office of Education from Title III provisions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, its intent was to bring under one umbrella current major problems of the schools, the relationship of the schools to the broader community, the impact of educational change now occurring throughout the nation, and a fresh view of the educational needs, goals and aspirations of our youth and adults. The utlimate purpose of the project was to weld into an integrated plan the best use of available resources to meet the totality of current and projected educational needs. Design and application of such a comprehensive urban, interagency, educational planning model was an innovative planning project far exceeding in scope any known prior education master plan.

The first year of the project was organized to assess current and projected needs in the urban area served by the Fresno City Schools with particular reference to certain identified major problems. Development of new interagency planning relationships with major governmental and community groups was an optimum goal.

Second year activity focused upon generating and evaluating practical alternate solutions and designing short-term, intermediate and long-range recommendations in harmony both with the predictable future and with current constraints and limitations.

Introduction

Among the most rigid of educational traditions in the United States has been the pattern of school organization. Late in the 1950's, change and challenge resulted in serious study and significant re-affirmation of the logic for the comprehensive program in the nation's high schools.

In the 1960's educational innovation has rapidly accelerated. Patterns of school organization are again under study and two significant trends have emerged. Initial Project Design specifications included consideration of the "educational park" concept for Fresno and the staff also became aware of emerging "middle school".

During the peliminary planning for the successful passage of the school construction bonds in November, 1968, both project and district staff members evaluated feasibility of educational parks. For many reasons it was agreed they were not a viable alternative and a report was made to the Board of Education by the project staff to this effect, noting interest in the middle school and other less comprehensive organization pattern changes which were under consideration.

Additional study of educational parks as a long-range consideration was made, however, as well as intensive evaluation of the feasibility of middle schools. This report includes the major findings and evaluation of each potential school organization pattern change.

Study of the educational park included an observation of the Nova complex in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, attendance at a major national

conference on educational parks in New York City, continued contact with the educational park study in San Jose and a review of the literature.

Direct dialogue with various authorities, and reviews of the literature indicated logical consideration of middle schools. Evaluation observations were, as a result, arranged for several district principals and project staff members to observe middle schools operating in Ohio, Texas and California.

Appreciation is extended to the Fresno County Research and Evaluation Center (EDICT) and its director, Dr. John A. Dow, for valuable assistance in facilitating middle school observations.

THE EDUCATIONAL PARK

In education, as in all areas of human endeavor, we search for panaceas. The search is particularly intense during a period of extreme stress such as that education is facing at the present time. Never before has education been the target for such comprehensive criticism; never before has it found social, ethical,financial and moral problems so acute. Urban education, with expanding pressures of population and racial unrest, is particularly in need of such a cure-all. The purpose of this paper is to discuss the status, and the theoretical and practical advantages and disadvantages of a singularly popular idea in the recent history of education, the Educational Park, a concept considered by some to be the sought-after panacea.

The Educational Park — A Debatable Definition.

A generally accepted definition of the educational park (synonymous with educational plaza, or educational center) is that it is a large school with a large student population drawn to a centrally located campus from many smaller neighborhoods. Another definition is, "a large clustering of educational facilities serving all schools on a campus"(8). These definitions are quite inclusive and leave considerable room for debate as to what indeed does constitute an educational park; there is no single definition. The Nova complex in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, for example, accepted as perhaps the most comprehensive educational park, constitutes the grouping in a single location of school facilities from kindergarten through junior college. It should be noted that the Nova complex, is, in fact, a separate system

operating alongside a parallel traditional system within a county school organization, with its student population selected generally on a voluntary basis. Two other systems which have been termed educational parks are those in final planning stages in San Jose, California and in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The San Jose educational park is being designed to group several existing high school attendance areas into a single larger area served by one school, while Pittsburgh is grouping all of its high schools into five large schools. Another complex labeled an educational park is that planned for Norfolk, Virginia. This is simply a central resource area similar to the present Instructional Materials Center in Fresno. Another larger variation of the educational park is the system planned for the New York City area in which several massive educational complexes are being designed to serve specifically defined areas (9).

Although theoretical discussion regarding the educational park concept often concerns student populations of 70,000 to 80,000, virtually all in the planning stages and all in the operational phase constitute groupings of less than 7,000 students.

A definition that would probably encompass all experiments at the present time is, "a single educational complex providing facilities for students formerly served by more than one educational facility". This definition would encompass the kindergarten through university concept as well as parks which are actually massive elementary schools or massive secondary schools.

These attempts at definitions notwithstanding, the educational park concept is usually discussed as a massive centralized all-inclusive kindergarten through secondary or university complex in which all services are combined within a single area and in which attendance zones or boundaries as we know them do not exist. It is possible in this ideal educational complex for a student to accomplish his complete education from kindergarten through graduate work at a university.

A point of some significance is that initial arguments for the educational park resulted from attempts to eliminate the problems of segregated schools in urban communities; this aspect remains a prime mover in most educational park plans. Dr. Max Wolff, however, at present the foremost exponent of the educational park concept and the Director of the Center for Urban Education (CUE) in New York City, declared in a recent speech that the needs of integration or desegregation cannot in themselves justify the construction of an educational park.*

There are, in short, few common denominators that apply to the concept of the educational park. In a recent conference in New York conducted by the Center for Urban Education, an aura of hopeful optimism existed, but the specifics of planning and operation of educational parks were by no means universally accepted. Dr. Austin Swanson of the Buffalo City Schools, in an analysis of the current Buffalo Fducational Parks Study, pointed out that there existed at present no guides to follow in planning, construction or operation of educational parks other than those based on theory.

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*Speech presented at Center for Urban Education Conference, New York City, May 28, 1969.

"We are dealing in hypotheticals," he claimed, "in which there is little information that can provide a realistic cost benefit analysis upon which logical planning should proceed."*

The Educational Park — Why?

As previously mentioned, the initial impetus for the educational park took place in response to concerns about segregation. Desegregation is automatically accomplished, of course, in a situation in which a single school exists for a single metropolitan community. It was pointed out, however, rather emphatically by Dr. R. A. Dentler in a recent speech in New York City, that although desegregation may be accomplished, we may not necessarily be solving problems of integration. Physical proximity can be accomplished in this manner but the park does not guarantee social, emotional, and economic equality among the races.

If desegregation, then, does not justify the educational park, what other advantages does it offer? Virtually all other advantages of the educational park revolve about its basic characteristic, the accumulation in a single area of all facilities composing the educational district.

The most obvious advantage is the opportunity to avoid the duplication of expensive equipment and materials presently provided in multiple quantities throughout a typical school district. An adjunct of this is the opportunity for the effective use of specialists in curricular or

*Speech presented at Center for Urban Educational Conference, New York City, May 28, 1969.

in-service areas. It is extremely difficult and expensive at present to draw all the students from all schools in a typical district into a central location to work with specialists, or to listen to an acknowledged expert in a particular field of endeavor. Should an astronaut, for example, be available to talk to interested students in the Fresno City Unified School District at present, considerable travel either on the part of the students or of the guest would be necessary in order for all interested students to take advantage of the opportunity.

One of the most frustrating problems facing the student, teacher, and administrator, is that created by the mobility of students. Within a district the size of Fresno, even though program offerings are quite similar from school to school, movement of a student within the community entails, in most cases, a change of school and consequent shift in learning patterns. A centralized school facility would eliminate this difficulty. A similar problem occurs in terms of mobility of teachers. Recent Project Design research indicated a marked tendency within the Fresno City District for teachers with lower levels of experience to be found in schools in minority areas. The problem of teacher transfers would be less a problem in a centralized facility, to the benefit of the students they serve.

A problem of some magnitude concerns the difficulty of accomplishing sequential instruction in a system in which a student changes schools at periodic levels. Although the student in the educational park would still shift levels at intervals, the proximity of the available offerings

and his general familiarity with the same school would render the change much less disruptive. The difficulty experienced by teachers in accomplishing a meaningful and logical articulation between school levels could be minimized.

A solution to the problem of duplication of materials has been a central goal of all educational park planning to date. In order to provide all of Fresno's children an adequate library resource, for example, it is presently necessary to provide six high school libraries and over 50 basic elementary school libraries at a considerable cost. Supplementary materials are provided through the facilities of the Instructional Materials Center, but at a cost of considerable time, money and effort caused by the necessary process of requisition and distribution. Funds expended in these areas could be well spent in the purchase of additional materials for the benefit of a greater number of students per dollar.

The utilization of space is and always will be a problem in the operation of a massive school organization. It is a frustrating fact that within our district at present, as well as school districts in general, one given school could well be under-utilized in terms of enrollment, because of its location within the geographical boundaries of the district while at the same time a school in a newer section finds it necessary to consider or to adopt a double session plan. Space within a massive educational park, becomes usable by all students

at all levels regardless of the location of their homes. It is anticipated that more classrooms, particularly at the secondary levels, could be utilized more efficiently.

The needs of large group and small group instruction could also be more effectively met in a facility which is designed for the individualized instruction,flexible scheduling, and differentiated staffing concepts which are now being tried in numerous schools throughout the country, but which are being limited by the shortages of appropriately designed, utilizable space.

Costs of construction of an educational park, although massive, are likely to be less per student than are equal traditional facilities scattered throughout the district. Actual costs anticipated in current educational parks studies throughout the country indicate with few exceptions that total construction costs are consistently less per student. Total costs, including transportation, however, do render the educational park in its totality more expensive in the long term.

Another major advantage of the educational park lies in the fact that the utilization of traditional educational facilities for community activities is difficult. Small scattered facilities throughout the community serve some neighborhood purpose, to be sure, but the potential for centralized health services, association with medical facilities, centralized occupational services, an adult school center utilizing existing day time facilities, recreational facilities far beyond those now available, and the opportunity for general cultural activities

within the community could be enhanced considerably by a centralized facility providing for all of these functions.

The Educational Park — Why Not?

Lest the educational park be considered the sought-after panacea it is wise also to consider some of the inherent problems in its establishment and operation. The caution with which present districts are considering educational parks, both those in the planning stages and those already committed to the park in some form, indicate that there is need for most serious consideration before making an all-inclusive commitment.

The first problem that a central educational park does establish is a need for transporting a much greater number of students than is necessary in the traditional educational pattern. As previously mentioned, construction costs of the educational park may well be less than the collective costs of separate facilities; but costs of transportation will more than compensate for this saving. It is to be anticipated on the basis of the experience of those who have completed planning projects that the total cost of the educational park is higher than that of the traditional pattern.

A second cost factor involves the utilization of existing buildings. One modification of the educational park might be the maintenance of the elementary level schools on a neighborhood basis and the conversion of some existing elementary schools to pre-kindergarten schools, but the fact remains that the majority of existing school buildings, many of which

are completely usable and some of which are new, must be used either for some other purpose, or be disposed of. It can be reasonably expected that some school buildings, particularly those built on an open space plan, could be utilizable by private business, and that some could be sold to private schools, and that the sale of real property regardless of the utilization of the attendant buildings could provide a significant amount of funds for construction of an educational park. It is unlikely, however, that a major proportion of the investment in the traditional buildings could be redeemed in the process of disposal of existing sites and buildings.

It should be noted that in California a particular problem exists in that a vast majority of schools are relatively new and still quite usable. In many eastern areas now considering parks such as East Orange, New Jersey, for example, most buildings being replaced are quite old and need replacement (2). The fact that Fresno had a group of schools which failed to meet earthquake standards and would have to be replaced, combined with the educational parks potential for remedying a de facto segregated school situation encouraged Fresno's serious consideration.

A second major concern would be that the concept of the neighborhood school, at least on a small neighborhood basis, would have to be abandoned. It can be argued that there is no such thing as a specific neighborhood which feeds all schools through which the typical student passes, but loyalty to the concept is well-ingrained in most educational systems. It would be necessary to accomplish a massive "sales" job in order to accomplish acceptance of the educational park concept.

Another problem of some concern to parents and educators is that of the unmanageablility of large numbers of students in a central location.

Fresno, by the time of the establishment of an educational park, would very likely have more than 60,000 students to move to a single central location. It is difficult for most to accept the viability of such a massive operation. It should be stated, however, that most educational park plans encompass a decentralized plant pattern in which small school units still exist as entities and through which most individual schools now in existence might retain their identity in name.

Dr. R. A. Dentler at the New York CUE Conference cautioned those who might consider the educational park a panacea. He pointed out that the park itself provides no answer for such significant problems as those created by the confusion and inequity of public school finance programs. The park moreover, is likely to have little effect on the problems created by the irregularities and inequities in district boundaries.

He stated, further, that although the effect of educational parks could very well be positive in totality, the quality of the teaching and learning process would not transform itself automatically. The park does provide the potential format and facility for educational innovation, and the processes of teaching and learning can indeed be influenced favorably, but the opposite result could very well be accomplished where strong leadership is lacking. Dentler also felt that we must caution ourselves not to expect a transformation in human relations simply on the basis of a modified facility, regardless of its uniqueness. Human relationships have a tendency to be oblivious to architectural and educational structure patterns; hatreds will remain hatreds, confusion will remain confusion and antagonisms are not likely to be changed simply

on the basis of new physical surroundings. Dentler echoed the comments of Max Wolff by pointing out that although the educational park could very well eliminate the problem of segregation, it would not necessarily provide integration; poorly handled, desegregation on this basis could well do more harm than good.

In summary, those who float in the euphoria of optimism about the potential success of the educational park or plaza concept are cautioned by those less enthusiastic that a massive investment in an educational park carries along with it potential for great success, but has potential for just as great a failure. For the potential of the ideal educational park to be realized it will be necessary for a commitment in scope far beyond that yet made by any educational authorities to date. Since no comprehensive educational park exists at present, such a commitment cannot be made on the basis of experience, but can be made only by those who are willing to step on to a new frontier and to risk failure in the hope of finding a pathway out of the frustrating morass of current confusion, doubt and failure in which we find ourselves.

Present Status of the Educational Park

As a result of the survey conducted in the Spring of 1969 by the Center for Urban Education a comprehensive list of current activities in educational park planning, operation, or construction is available(9). The reader should be aware, however, that as defined by the Center for Urban Education, an educational park is an educational park when defined as such by the subject of the survey. As previously mentioned, an educational park

can be anything from a large elementary school through a massive complex including educational facilities from the cradle to graduate school. Although locations are listed, little detail is provided as to the characteristics of each of the particular programs.

The report cites five operating educational parks: Ft. Lauderdale, Florida (the Nova complex); Evanston, Illinois; Acton, Massachusetts; Nanuet, New York; and Youngstown, New York (9). Since the latter three are operating in communities with populations less than 20,000 it may be assumed that if all educational functions within each of these districts is confined to single complex the student population is not likely to be over 5,000. Details on these three parks are not available, nor is information available on the Evanston plan.

At the present time plans have been approved and construction is under way on educational parks of varying dimensions in the Northeast Bronx area, New York; the John F. Kennedy Educational Park in the Bronx-Manhatten area; in Vallejo, California; Anniston, Alabama; Pontiac, Michigan; Atlanta, Georgia; and Plymouth, Michigan. Specific information as to the scope of each of these plans is not yet available, but none as yet is completed and operating. The above mentioned districts constitute the totality of those districts which have entered the construction stage (9).

Numerous studies are under way in major and minor cities throughout the United States in anticipation of potential operations of educational parks in some form. Chicago has at present a master plan for a series of magnet schools throughout its massive area (3). Los Angeles is now operating

its Apex plan of specialized secondary schools and has been funded by the Federal government for study and construction of two educational centers in minority areas. Seattle has completed plans, although has not begun construction or operation, of a series of continuous progress centers throughout the greater Seattle area. Other cities in the process of planning or study of educational parks are Detroit, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, San Francisco, Boston, Cleveland, Baltimore, Washington D.C., Berkeley, Grand Rapids, Hartford, Norfolk, San Jose, St. Paul, Syracuse, East Orange, Oklahoma City, Oakland, Denver, Niagara Falls, Rochester, and Sault Ste. Marie (9).

It is interesting to note that a great mass of information is available in educational literature pertaining to educational park plans, many of which are listed above. The Pittsburgh Greater High School system, for instance, the Washington D.C. educational park plan; the East Orange, New Jersey plan; and a planning project in Hartford, Connecticut are analyzed in considerable detail in current educational publications. A common impression exists, as a result, that a great number of educational parks at present are in operation. Most recent facts however, indicate that a great number have gone no farther than serious planning. The Pittsburgh Greater High School Plan, for instance, is still in the final stages of formulation and beginning stages of construction; the Philadelphia plan for educational parks has developed into a sustained debate; the East Orange, New Jersey plan has been temporarily abandoned and the Washington D. C. plan has not yet come to any operational fruition.

In summary, <u>there exists at the present time no single governance educational park of any significant magnitude in a major urban center</u>

within the United States. Resistance, cited by the Center for Urban Education in a survey conducted in 1966, seems to have been overcome, and the attitude of educators at present is "How can we do it?" The concept has developed to an advanced degree in theory but has not come to fruition in a viable operational park which can provide the needed experimentation and analysis of the concept and its operation. In the words of Dr. Max Wolff, "The educational park, despite a great deal of study and planning, remains a promise that needs to be tested".

Educational Park Feasibility For Fresno

Prior to the project study, the opinion had been expressed that extensive building required to replace unsafe schools could capitalize upon the educational park concept to eliminate de facto segregation.

In the judgment of the project staff, the concept of the single massive educational park is not feasible for Fresno. Cost of such an educational complex, considering necessary abandonment and/or disposition of existing usable facilities, would be clearly beyond potential of the community. Such a park would eliminate de facto school segregation, but the transportation to serve it would entail costs which would make a simple direct student balance transportation plan inexpensive in comparison. Placing some 60,000 students into a single complex, moreover, would be difficult to "sell" to the community.

A series of smaller parks, similar to those planned for Pittsburgh and San Jose, appear at first glance to be more feasible. However, peripheral concentration of minorities in West Fresno rather than in a

central area typical of urban cities, would prevent such parks from reducing racial imbalance. The several "parks" would logically be in the same general geographic areas that now constitute the root source of de facto segregation. If geographic boundaries were not considered in student assignment to such schools, this plan would constitute little improvement over our present system of existing facilities and "open enrollment". If elimination of de facto segregation was a primary objective, extensive transportation would again be required which would parallel costs for a direct student balance transportation plan. Smaller educational parks are not recommended for these reasons.

There are aspects of centralization, however, deemed of some practical value for Fresno. Other project recommendations include racially balanced 9th grade schools, for example, which incorporate elements of the educational park.

In summary, the concept of educational parks is broad and may be interpreted in many ways. In general, the educational park remains largely theoretical; few have moved to physical planning and construction stages. As conceived, its primary purpose was to facilitate racial integration. Later, more attention was given to other potentials for improved efficiency and educational productivity, increased facility utilization, wider range of various special facilities, and increased support and specialist staff services. Such educational gains have not been evaluated. Cost projections must be related to local conditions and include both massive construction and transportation funding.

The future of the educational park is still obscure. As concepts are translated into reality much more valid evaluative data will be available. It is recommended that the district continue to monitor this concept.

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THE MIDDLE SCHOOL

One of the most acceptable innovations which has recently found considerable favor among educators as well as the lay public has been the middle school. This acceptance has not come spontaneously, nor is it universal, but in today's educational framework characterized by a massive number of changes, none appear more acceptable than the middle school. As perceived by its advocates, the middle school is not only a strong innovative trend in changing school organization patterns, but it provides a setting for incorporating and using a wide variety of other exciting innovations.

The Middle School - Some Questions

What specifically is a middle school? How is it different from the traditional junior high? Why can the middle schools provide a better framework for desirable innovations than can the traditional junior high? How practical and how desirable would middle schools be for Fresno? These basic questions are being asked in Fresno, as well as other districts considering a transition to the middle school, and this report will attempt to answer these questions.

In studying these questions it was necessary to examine the history of organization plans, to investigate the rationale for the middle school, and to identify the characteristics of existing middle schools. In so doing, it was possible to list the advantages and disadvantages of the middle school and to indicate districts which are currently operating such schools with an analysis of factors contributing to success or failure.

The History of Educational Organization Patterns

The predominant school pattern in the United States today, (the 6-3-3 organization plan) had its beginning sixty years ago with discontented university administrators who were concerned with lowering the age of college entrants. Established at that time was the six year secondary school, beginning with grade seven, designed to assure early specialization of subject matter.

The operation of this plan was soon altered to include a bridge between the elementary school with its self-contained classroom and the highly specialized program of the senior high school. This bridge was designated the junior high school and consisted of grades 7, 8, and 9. The new junior high schools were designed to encourage "exploratory experience" which would allow students to sample a variety of subject areas before commitment to a specific program in the senior high school. The plan also incorporated, in some cases, guidance services as an aid in academic, vocational, and personal planning. By 1960 the junior high school program enrolled 80 per cent of all students in these grades.

Within very recent years, amid the continuing debate regarding the value of the junior high school, a new concept has been proposed which calls for the reinstatement of the four-year high school, and the establishment of a middle school between the elementary grades and the high school. The patterns most commonly suggested for this middle school concept were 5-3-4, and 4-4-4 and trends towards such patterns have

been established. The NEA Educational Research Service, in a study of 449 systems, in 1965 found that 68 per cent of the schools were on a 6-3-3 program, fewer than the 71 per cent reported in a similar study in 1963. More than 11 per cent of the schools were using the 6-2-4 plan in 1968 compared to 6 per cent in 1963, and 4 per cent were using either the 4-4-4 or 5-3-4 plan compared to 1 per cent in 1963. The 8-4 plan was definitely losing favor, being down to nearly 9 per cent of the schools reporting (10). Although trends are shown in this study, the variety of patterns in use indicate that there is little agreement as to the single most effective plan. In fact, research has yet to establish the superiority of one pattern over another in terms of educational productivity. The question as to what grades should be included in the junior high school remains unanswered.

There has been consistent concern about the placement of the ninth grade within the junior high school. The carnegie unit system, long used as a basis for college entrance is geared to a four year sequence of courses. James B. Conant feels that the ninth grade, consequently, is a part of the high school program regardless of its location in terms of school organization (5). Because of the preoccupation with college entrance requirements, interscholastic sports, marching bands and early sophistication that receives too much emphasis, many feel that grade nine should be omitted from the middle school.

In practice, many middle schools were identified when ninth grade classes were shifted to the high school, and the junior high accepted the sixth and often the fifth grade from the elementary school.

Middle Schools - a Definition

There are a variety of definitions as to just what constitutes a middle school. In their zeal to be identified with what they consider to be forward thinking education, some districts have gone so far as to change the lettering above the school entrance without making any changes within the school.

In very general terms, however, William Alexander defined the middle school as:

> ....one providing a program planned for a range of older children, pre-adolescents, and early adolescents that builds upon the elementary school program of earlier childhood and in turn is built into the high schools's program for adolescence. (1)

At the heart of the middle school concept, whatever it may be called, lies the precept that the special needs of the 10 to 14 age group must be provided for, easing the transition from childhood to adolescence and bridging the gap between the self-contained elementary school and the departmentalized high school. The National Education Association, through its Educational Research Service, recently produced a list of distinguishing features of the middle school. These features were:

1. A span of at least three grades to allow for the gradual transition from elementary to high school instructional practices (must include grades 6 and 7, and no grades below 5 or above 8).

2. Emerging departmental structure in each higher grade to effect gradual transition from the self-contained elementary classroom to the departmentalized high school.

3. Flexible approaches to instruction: team teaching, flexible scheduling, individualized instruction, independent study, tutorial programs — and other approaches aimed at stimulating children to learn how to learn.

4. Required special courses, taught in departmentalized form, such as industrial arts, home economics, foreign language, art, music, and typing. Frequently an interdisciplinary approach is used, e.g., 'unified arts', 'practical arts', 'humanities', 'performing arts', 'urban living'.

5. Guidance program as a district entity to fill the special needs of this age group.

6. Faculty with both elementary and secondary certification, or some teachers with each type (unit special training and certification are available for this level).

7. Limited attention to interschool sports and social activities (10).

It is recognized that the above seven characteristics are not common to all so-called middle schools, but these were identified as the desirable elements for these schools. It is also apparent that the changing of a title from junior high to middle school includes much more than a mere grade realignment.

Rationale for the Middle School

The group served by the middle school is characterized by great divergence in growth rate, height, weight, social maturity, interests, physical maturity, mental maturity, and academic skills.

These students are at a stage of development in which they are striving for independence and at the same time wanting to conform. On the one hand, they want to belong to their peer group; and on the other, they want adult help. The period is marked by highly idealistic attitudes, the need of the security of someone, and the need of something in which

to believe. They fear lack of acceptance and failure and commonly have crushes on their teachers (9).

The children of today mature earlier and are taller than their parents were at the same period. Recent cultural precocities include a pattern of early dating, going steady, and pairing off. The earlier maturation is partly due to better nutrition and improved socio-economic conditions; the indications are that this earlier maturation rate will continue. Accompanying this maturity are exaggerated tensions and anxieties. The nine year old of today is as large physically as the ten year old of thirty years ago. This earlier physical growth also means earlier sexual maturity (16).

This transitional period is marked by differences in physical maturity levels within each sex and between the sexes, as well as changes in physiological functioning greater than those occurring at any other time during the growth cycle. The psychological and social reorientations are more traumatic than at any similar period of growth (1).

Research shows that the duration of the period is from three and a half to five years. Male children enter this transition between ten and thirteen and a half years of age, whereas girls go through the period from eight and a half to eleven and a half years. Pubescence is reached by early maturing girls in the fifth grade on the average, and for boys, in the sixth grade (1).

The maturity ranges in the same grade may spread from eight years in the fifth grade (ranges seven to fifteen years), to a nine year range

in the eighth grade where organic maturity is from ten to nineteen years (1). The range of maturity decreases at each subsequent level in the senior high school.

If the middle school becomes the design to accommodate the uniqueness of students of these ages, other factors must be accounted for within the schools' program.

One of the identified characteristics of the emerging middle school is an attempt to combine the best features of the self-contained concept of the elementary school with the best features of specialization in secondary schools. This desirable combination may be achieved through a variety of patterns. In some instances, students are included within self-contained classrooms in either the fifth or sixth grade and gradually enter into departmentalized programs in the seventh and eighth. Another pattern schedules pupils with a home-base teacher for a block of time and then moves them to special teachers and laboratory centers.

Flexible approaches to teaching have become the practice rather than the exception in middle schools. Because the middle school idea developed in the 1960's it seems only natural for these schools to adopt the educational innovations of the 60's. All the so-called innovations of the 60's did not originate during these years; many of them were merely reborn. A typical current middle school has a number of these innovative features:

1. Team teaching - the middle school seems to better facilitate both subject area teams and interdisciplinary teams.

2. Flexible scheduling - the most common pattern involved dividing the day into modules of equal length, which are combined differently for various subjects and days of the week.

3. Individualized instruction - middle school staffs are using independent study-plans, progress through units, frequent rephasing of students, special skills, development laboratories, and programmed instructional materials, all pointed towards differentiated paths to different goals for individual students.

4. Independent study - examples found in the Centerville, Ohio school indicated a highly creative approach to student self-direction through the concept of student-structured time. A portion of his weekly schedule is devoted to his own choosing or design with increasing independent time as he demonstrates his ability to manage his own time.

5. Open-space facilities - the concept of open space construction with its emphasis on facilitating greater individualization through flexibility in the students' program has been accepted as essential in new middle school construction, and for the conversion of old schools to house these new concepts.

6. Other innovative features including continuous progress education, tutorial programs, closed-circuit television are found in several operating middle schools.

Although the above flexible approaches are not found exclusively in middle schools, any type of experimental approach tends to accept other experimental sub-projects within its major plan.

The curriculum of middle schools also differs from that of a typical junior high school. If the ninth grade were taken from the junior high, rigid adherence to standardized practice which the Carnegie Unit has forced onto the schools would have no meaning. The withdrawal of the ninth grade with its college preparatory emphasis could result in a more pupil-centered approach difficult to achieve with the aura of academic emphasis which permeates the present junior high. As a transitional school between the pupil-centered elementary and the subject-centered senior

high school, the middle school's curriculum could gradually eliminate the strict departmentalization and overbalance of academic subjects which is characteristic in the present junior high school program (6).

A guidance program is an integral part of the program in many middle schools. The importance of the guidance program is emphasized in the literature. As the student moves from the one-teacher association which he has experienced in the elementary school to the departmentalized concept with a number of teachers, the role of the guidance counselor becomes increasingly important. The need for security and stability of the pre-adolescent is strong, as it is with the younger child who receives such psychological support from the single teacher found in the typical elementary school. The counselor can soften this transitional stage in the student's development.

Middle schools, having both elementary and secondary credentialed teachers,would have a flexible staff expertise which would complement the total school program. Elementary teachers could blend their child-centered approaches with the subject-centered orientation of the secondary teacher (9). The availability of specialized teachers not now commonly available in the elementary school should increase the effectiveness of the program in the middle school.

With the elimination of the ninth grade, the middle school also lessens the pressure of interscholastic sports and social activities commonly associated with the high schools, and substitutes intramural sports and social activities more in tune with the social needs of this age group. A "high school, junior grade" should not be the label for the middle school.

In summary the middle school has these advantages:

1. Greater ability to cope with the variability of the "in-between" age groups.

2. Can employ different curricular approaches, not restricted by ninth grade scheduling or rigid departmentalization.

3. Newness which encourages experimentation with a variety of approaches to instruction.

4. A non-restrictive curricular approach, making possible a variety of facilities, services, teachers, and activities not otherwise available.

5. A blending of elementary and secondary practices and teacher attitudes.

Some feel that the middle school serves little purpose. Most of the logic for the middle school pattern is based on changes that can be accomplished within the present junior high structural framework (14). There has been some reluctance on the part of communities to accept the elimination of certain parts of traditional programs for the middle school. One major problem is the training of teachers to serve the unique needs of the middle school.

There may be a temporary problem with textbooks and syllabuses which are written assuming breaks between grades 6-7 and grades 9-10. There may also be restraints imposed on the program resulting from the need to use buildings designed for a traditional pattern. Many disadvantages result from making changes without adequate community, staff and pupil orientation and training for which the basic concept of the middle school should not be faulted.

Currently Operating Middle Schools

The research division of the National Education Association points out that the number of schools designated as middle schools has rapidly increased since 1965. Of the 154 schools operating under the middle school concept, 97 came into existence since 1965 (10). Many of these schools operate under various names other than "middle school" but all were identified with the middle school concept. Naturally, all middle-schools cannot operate in an identical manner just as many junior high schools have unique features within their individual programs.

Several operating middle schools are exemplary in nature and have been viewed by district staff and/or reported in the current literature.

Two middle schools in Centerville, Ohio - the Hithergreen Middle School and Tower Heights Middle School, are exemplary middle schools viewed by district staff. Each school housed 6th, 7th and 8th grade students in a transitional self-contained to departmentalized approach; using team teaching, modular scheduling and the individualized approaches to instruction. The facilities, all constructed recently, employ the "open space" concept, considered by the viewing staff to be an absolute essential to the effective operation of such a program.

The Barrington middle school in Barrington, Illinois, was also viewed by district staff. This school had been in operation somewhat longer than the schools in Ohio; hence, it was possible to see results on a basis other than short-term. The organizational operation of the school was very similar to the schools in Ohio, with 6th, 7th and 8th

grades being taught with similar curricular approaches, and housed in an "open-space" school building. It was reported at Barrington that some negative community reaction to the elimination of interscholastic sports and the marching band had arisen from the basically conservative community.

The John Glenn School in San Angelo, Texas was also viewed by district staff. Although this school was a "junior high school" in the sense that it housed 7th, 8th and 9th graders, many of the disadvantages of the traditional junior high were eliminated through innovative practices. There was an intensive pre-service program for staff in implementing a team approach, utilizing modular scheduling and operating within an open space facility.

Other exemplary schools characterizing middle schools' concepts include:

1. Fox Lane Middle School, Bedford, New York (grades 6-8), open space construction, emphasis on individualized construction and a unique access information retrieval system.

2. Chippewa Middle School, Saginaw, Michigan (grades 5-8) gradual movement of students from self-contained to departmentalized classes.

3. Del Mar Middle School, Tiburon, California.

4. P. K. Yonge Laboratory School, Dover, Delaware.

5. Community Middle School, Eagle Grove, Iowa.

Summary.

The middle school can offer a program that will serve Fresno youth better in the transition from childhood to adolescence. Use of the middle

school in the organization pattern will also ease the transition from the child-centered program of the elementary school to the subject centered program of the high school.

This school, unlike the present junior high school, is not a result of an effort to remedy supposed weaknesses of the original 8-4 system but is directly based on factors of child growth and development relating to the variability of development among this age group.

With a curricular approach restricted neither by ninth grade scheduling nor rigid departmentalization, there should be more opportunity for experimentation in curriculum and in scheduling of classes.

Most of the criticisms of the middle school center around the haste and manner in which the concepts were implemented rather than the idea itself. Currently operating middle schools were reported to be favorably influenced by the flexibility which is built into the middle school concept.

Middle School Feasibility for Fresno

In conclusion, the middle schools seem to have highly favorable aspects which could be adapted to the Fresno Schools. Values described in this report would be as desirable for Fresno as they were both for the districts planning implementation and those which have implemented them. Many of the recent innovative trends in Fresno would be further facilitated if the district would adopt the middle school concept. The individualized approach exemplified in Project READ and the RAP program

among others could better be extended into the middle grades. Team teaching and flexible scheduling as practiced in Ahwahnee would function more efficiently. The recently initiated building program as planned is based on the open space concept considered to be vital in middle school construction. These existing trends have indicated progress within the district which can be further enhanced by the adoption of the middle school concept.

Existing school facilities could be utilized for middle schools with minor modifications. Certification might present a staffing problem, but a resolvable one, particularly in a district of this size. Resistance to middle schools found in some districts could be eliminated by a well-timed communication program.

Recognizing the preliminary tasks requisite to full implementation, and cognizant of the benefits which such a concept can bring to Fresno, it is recommended that the Fresno City Schools seriously consider adopting an organizational pattern containing middle schools.

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PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

PHASE I — NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Staff Research Reports

1. Brainstorm — Needs Perceived by School Staff
2. Speak-Up — Needs Perceived by Community
3. Student Speak-Up — Needs Perceived by Secondary Students
4. School Staffing
5. Analysis of Achievement
6. Problems Perceived by Educational Leadership

County Schools Survey

7. Vocational Occupational Needs Survey (published by County Regional Planning and Evaluation Center - EDICT)
8. > Other County School Needs Survey Reports (EDICT)
9. >

TASK FORCE

Educational Content Fields

10. Reading
11. Language
12. Mathematics
13. Science
14. Foreign Language
15. Cultural Arts
16. Social Science
17. Physical Education

Other Educational Areas

18. Teaching/Learning Process
19. Special Education
20. Guidance
21. Health
22. Student Personnel
23. Adult Education
24. Vocational Education

Urban Physical Factors

25. Urban Physical Factors

Urban Social and Human Factors

26. Relevance and Quality of Education for Minorities
27. Special Needs of Mexican-Americans
28. Special Needs of Negroes

PROJECT PUBLICATIONS

PHASE II — MASTER PLAN DEVELOPMENT

29. Conclusions from Needs Assessment Publications

30. Summary — Fresno Educational Needs Assessment

31. The Process of Educational Planning

32. Mission Objectives

33. School Organization Patterns
    The Educational Park
    The Middle School

34. Interagency Educational Planning
    Community Planning Process

35. Interagency Educational Planning
    Community Planning Register

EDUCATIONAL MASTER PLAN

volume A	Summary
volume B	Configurations: Design for the Future
volume C	Implementation: Planned Change